

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
THE UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20508

The Honorable Ike Skelton
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2504

MAY 20 2009

Dear Congressman Skelton:

Thank you for your recent letter. As you know, since the H1N1 influenza outbreak was discovered, the Office of the United States Trade Representative has worked closely with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Centers for Disease Control to understand H1N1 concerns and to share the facts with America's trading partners. I agree with you that American pork is safe and we will continue our best efforts to communicate that message to our trading partners.

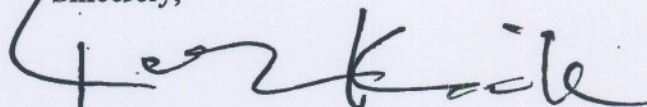
I have been in direct communication with a number of our trading partners directly urging them to drop unscientific pork import bans imposed by countries concerned about the spread of H1N1 influenza. I am concerned that these unjustified restrictions will likely result in serious trade disruptions without cause and result in significant economic damage.

Last week, I also issued a joint statement with Stockwell Day, Canadian Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia Pacific Gateway, and Gerardo Ruiz, Mexican Secretary of the Economy, calling for an end to bans on pork imports unsupported by science. In our statement we explain our governments' commitment to doing everything possible to bring the outbreak under control, while noting the large and negative economic impact of such bans. As you know, more than a dozen countries worldwide have sought to ban pork imports from H1N1-affected nations.

To bolster our efforts, on May 2, the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Trade Organization issued a statement saying that "there is no evidence that the virus is transmitted by food. There is currently therefore no justification in the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Code for the imposition of trade measures on the importation of pigs or their products." These organizations stressed that "pork and pork products, handled in accordance with good hygienic practices recommended by the WHO, FAO, Codex Alimentarius Commission and the OIE, will not be a source of infection." We will continue to work with these organizations to press our trading partners to meet their international obligations.

In view of the above, and the safety of our American food supply, I will continue to work closely with you to urge our trading partners to remove these restrictions on our products immediately. You have my firm commitment that we will continue to follow this situation closely and will take any steps to prevent the enforcement of unjustified measures against our exports as appropriate.

Sincerely,



Ronald Kirk